I am writing to make my voice heard about the DOJ's settlement of the Microsoft case.

Due to Microsoft's past behaviour regarding licensing, I think that it is important to include a provision to allow people to not have to pay for Microsoft software by default. You should require that the Microsoft software be an independant removable option from the purchase of any computer, much like a monitor or a printer or other peripheral might be. This would allow people who don't use Microsoft software to not pay for it. Related to this, if the computer manufacturer has it as an option, people should be allowed to have both the Microsoft OS option and an alternative OS option be both installed on the same machine. Microsoft's current licensing with most major computer manufacturers currently appears to disallow this, thus discouraging people from exploring alternatives to Microsoft's OS.

Since Microsoft has established an effective standard for common file formats for office communications through the widespread use of its Office software applications, it should be forced to publish those formats publicly so that anyone may produce software capable of reading and writing those types of documents. It should also provide those formats in a timely fashion so that competing office applications could work shortly after a new format is produced by the Microsoft software. These formats should be available to anyone willing to write software to read these files, not just for-profit companies.

Many people believe that Microsoft's Applications programmers get special information from the OS group about hidden or undocumented APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) in the OS. I think that the reality is less sinister than this. However, the Applications group will have access to internal Microsoft documents about APIs that may not get published publicly, whether this failure to publish those APIs is intentional or not. These APIs should be available to anyone who wishes to write software to use these APIs, not just for-profit companies.

To improve competition and the quality of Microsoft software, Microsoft needs to publish all the APIs it has developed for is Operating Systems. This should also help change the perception that Microsoft changes its APIs gratuitously to force people to buy new versions of its software, rather than changing their APIs to improve the software. Additionally, interoperability has always been an important concept in distributed systems. Since Microsoft has been increasing its capabilities in the distributed systems via their new operating systems, Windows 2000 and Windows XP, it is important that their software's network APIs are

well documented. For instance, in Windows 2000, they took a commonly
defined Kerberos (an authentication API) implementation and changed it
enough so that other operating systems were unable to use it. Then they
failed to properly document the changes they made to the standard. This
sort of behaviour on Microsoft's part should be stopped.

There is evidence they are planning on using a similar strategy to prevent
people from choosing other network services than their own.   Since they
own the OS that the vast majority of people use to access the internet it
is apparent they plan to force people to use only their services rather
than allowing people to choose which services best meet their needs. With
any other company, these tactics might be viewed as good competitive
practice. However, given the power Microsoft has in the personal
computing industry, these tactics are anti-competitive and must be
addressed to prevent their further monopolization in these areas.

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